

THE WAYAO OF NYABALAND

239

Other hypothetical diseases which are caused by disobedience to custom are mentioned under various other headings. *Kasipa*: a disease generally characterized by ulceration of the legs but in some cases by pains in the back, or loosely used for a variety of symptoms, is said to be caused by the entry into the body of a worm which lives in water-pools. This worm which I have had identified is a gordian worm and not known to be parasitic in man. *Laesi*: When a man kills another in battle, he will slit open the belly of his victim; otherwise he believes he will sicken with *laesi* and his own belly will swell up like that of the corpse when putrefaction sets in. He is supposed also to hunger after more killing and blood. *Litango* is the name of a supposed disease which kills off one child after another in a family when they are about six months old. Congenital syphilis naturally suggests itself but I have never been able to verify this idea. *Litango lya kutula*: a supposed disease which causes the death of the first child when the second is born, the second when the third is born and so on, whatever the intervals between the births. Each child is said to push (*ku-tula*) the previous one out of this world. Under these circumstances the disease is ascribed to something wrong with the mother or father and they are examined by a medicine-woman or medicine-man, and any carunculae or an external pile found will be cut away.

If a snake inflicts two bites, the case will prove fatal. If a crocodile emits a grunting sound when seizing its victim, though he escape he will certainly die.

Treatment of disease. Of surgical treatment there is very little to be noted. Nothing in the way of operation is performed with the exception of circumcision (see *Lupanda*).

An abscess is allowed to burst, the smallest tumor is left untouched, but accessory digits which are not rare, attached only by a fine pedicle, are snipped off.

The natives cannot extract teeth. They are incapable of rendering any assistance in cases of difficult labor. Dislocations are not recognized as such, but fractures are treated by the application of wooden sticks placed at intervals round the circumference of the limb parallel to it and held in position by twisted pieces of bark string (Pl. XXII, fig. 3). The principle of the tourniquet appears to be unknown.

The only instruments used consist of a small knife for incision, a cupping-horn, and a primitive form of funnel for administering enemata (Pl. XXII, figs. 1, 2, 4). The knife has a triangular blade with a stem which is commonly twisted at one of the corners. The knife is used for wet-cupping, tattooing, and circumcision (Pl. XXII, fig. 2). The cupping-horn is a small horn of a calf. The apex is pierced and after application to the part, suction is made with the mouth and then the hole sealed by working a piece of beeswax over it with the tongue. Six small incisions are made in the skin for the withdrawal of the blood. The cupping-horn is called *chusi* (*nukumiz*, Chin.). Cupping is used for headache and for pain in the chest and back. The enema funnel, *chigolye* (*ntimbiri*, Chin.) is made from the neck of a gourd to which is attached a hollow straw for introduction into the anus. Half a pint of an infusion of *nungetu* is injected for constipation associated with pain.

757 Simple incision is practiced for relief of pain or again "medicine" may be introduced into the wound. Such medicine usually consists of charcoal prepared from various vegetable substances. There is no evidence that any active medicinal principles are involved and the most that is attained is probably a certain amount of counter-irritation. For pain, a string is tied tightly round the part; thus for headache one sees a string tied round the head and doubtless some relief is felt when pressure is made on the temples. A man with an abscess of the hand or foot will tie a string round the arm or leg, but I have never seen it so applied as to produce any effect comparable to that of Bier's hyperaemic treatment. By analogy a string may be worn round the chest for pleuritic pain and by limiting movement may be effective. In many cases a charm is attached to the string as an adjuvant.

The use of drugs as such is widespread but I have very little evidence of their efficacy. The methods of administration are various. The vapor bath is often used. Over a pot of water in which have been dropped herbs and stones heated in a fire, the patient squats enveloped in a blanket and is thereby subjected to the action of the medicated steam. This method is also adopted for exorcism. A case which came recently to my notice was the wife of a native hospital dresser who, suffering pain in the abdomen, avoided my ministrations and consulted a female medicine-maker. She was given a vapor bath as above described and after a few moments, the medicine-woman clapped her on the back and told her to rise. The old woman plunged her hands into the pot and brought forth some human hair tied in a piece of calico and a human metacarpal bone. "These are what troubled you," she said — fee £1! This is called *ku-topolola*, to take evil things out for.

755 Various powdered barks and leaves are applied to ulcers and appear to have an astringent effect in some cases but the majority seem to go from bad to worse. No other external applications have been observed except one for scabies. Incision of the skin and insertion of "medicine" have been mentioned above.

Large numbers of vegetable products are administered by mouth, always in the form of an infusion or suspension. It is probable that a number of these are really beneficial but I am not able to speak in detail of their effects. Many astringents are undoubtedly used for diarrhoea. Herbs containing oil are used for gonorrhoea.

757 Apart from magic medicine dealt with elsewhere and commonly employed for purposes outside disease, charms are used for the prevention and treatment of ordinary diseases and injuries. There are only a few varieties of charms. A vegetable substance, root or stem, may be worn on a string round the part of the body concerned. Thus one sees a couple of little pieces of stick, *mbiji*, on a string tied round the head, round the arm or round the chest for headache, a whitlow or diarrhoea as the case may be. The medicine may be in the form of a preparation, generally charred vegetable substances, and is made into a little packet in leaves and cloth worn most commonly round the neck; it is called *kohumua*. Such a charm is supposed to be effective against all ills.

THE WAYAO OF NYARALAND

291

Again, charm medicine may be contained in various articles which are also generally worn round the neck. The teeth and claws of the beasts of prey are so employed, generally arranged in pairs bound together so as to form a crescent and suspended from a string. The teeth of crocodiles, lions, leopards, and the claws of the same beasts and of some large birds of prey are thus employed. The teeth etc., are in themselves charms against injury, probably against what one might call homologous injury. The idea of stuffing them with medicine is probably a secondary consideration, a process of fortification of the charm so that its use comes to have a more powerful influence. It is interesting to see of late years that the native, recognizing the decorative value of these crescent-shaped amulets, has begun to copy them in lead and ivory. A series of these of graduated size is worn as a necklace by women.

When a medicine-man is consulted, part payment is made in advance, "payment to go and dig medicine (roots)." The rest of the payment is made when the cure is effected. Should a patient not be satisfied with his treatment and wish to consult some other medicine-man, he pays to the first a quarter of the fee he would have paid if his cure had been effected; this is called "paying him to get his medicine away." Unless this is done, should he recover later, he will be liable to claims for full fees from all of the medicine-men he has consulted; each will say his own medicine has gone on acting and has effected the cure. A medicine-man may take a case he is treating into his own house.

In prescribing medicine, very particular instructions are given with an embargo on certain things which may or may not have some use and significance. A medicine-man in 1891 at Malemy's, who inoculated every one in the forehead with bullet proof medicine, said that no one must step across a *musai* (pestle for pounding grain), and no one must eat the leaves of the sweet potato.

A medicine-man always partakes of part of the decoction he is giving to a patient to show that it is harmless; I think these preparations are mostly inactive. I should hate to sample all the castor oil I have prescribed, though many natives have had suspicions about me when I have not done so.

Poisons. Though there are a large number of species in this country, both vegetable and animal, from which poison might be extracted, those that have gained any reputation among natives and have come under my observation are but few in number. *Musi* (*Mucobi* Chin.) "the ordeal poison," is the bark of *Erythrophloeum guineense*. The natives distinguish two varieties of *musi*, the two trees differing slightly in leaf, flower and bark; *musi* is the *Erythrophloeum guineense*, the second variety known as *superanjilu* is doubtless an allied species. *Musi* is the poison employed in the poison ordeal.¹ It is administered in a poisonous dose as a decoction of the bark, recovery or otherwise depending on whether or not the poison is voided by vomiting. Natives give as the symptoms headache, giddiness, disturbances of vision, vomiting and purging, with slowing of heart beat. *Mper*

¹ Vide infra, p. 286.

THE WAYAO OF NYABALAND

305

Witch-medicine. The making of medicine against people has been shown to occupy an essential place in *uswei*, and it plays an important part in all occultism. So by innumerable grades, the ordinary use of drugs in common diseases is reached, though it is probable that very much greater faith is placed in a packet of burnt roots put under the floor of the house than in the efficacy of any concoction taken by mouth.

There is a general belief that by medicine extra ability verging into supernatural power can be acquired. This power in a general sense is represented by the word *ukoma* and a man so possessed is spoken of as *uwandu juu kowala*. The desire for increased power may be a perfectly natural one, such as a desire for influence and popularity as a chief, or on the other hand, the power of *uswei* may be aimed at, or again, the knowledge of magic medicine for thieving or for any other practice. *Ukoma* is, therefore, a relative matter. The necessary medicine or initiation into the understanding of magic can be purchased from persons already practitioners, the honest herbalist merging by imperceptible degrees into the most criminal witch-doctor. A single practitioner may prescribe a charcoal dressing for an ulcer, exorcise an evil spirit by a vapor bath, sell medicine to enable the buyer to win a case at court, arrange medicine on a pathway to act as a selective love potion, or prescribe a drug to change a man into a lion.

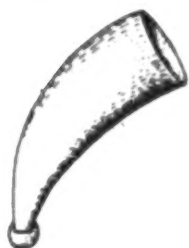
Deserving of special mention are the people who thieve by the aid of medicine which they have either purchased or prepared themselves. Such a man is called *chitaka* and the medicine *mwela wa chitaka*. The active principle of this medicine is said to be prepared from the tail of a hyena, an animal which is said to be able to enter a house where people are sleeping and kill and carry off the fowls without waking the occupants. The medicine is often carried in a hyena's tail. The *chitaka* is supposed to approach the house he would rob and chewing some medicine in the mouth, gently blow towards it to put everyone to sleep. The door is supposed to unfasten itself and the thief is free to take what he wishes. He is even said to kill, cook, and eat food in the house while the inmates remain unconscious. A special characteristic of the *chitaka* is that whatever he lays his hands on in the house he must remove, though he does not want it, so that in the morning many unwikely, useless objects may be found outside the hut.

There are many other magic medicines. One of these, *luanga*, if introduced into a village, will cause the illness and death of some inmates. Anyone handling the body of the sick man or the corpse after death, sickness and dies until the whole village is wiped out. There is a man serving a life sentence now at the Central Prison, Zomba, who was convicted of having caused the death of many people in a village in Angoniland. He is said cheerfully to have admitted the power of his medicine.

Medicine made from a cousin is supposed to be efficacious in various ways. The blood of a cousin is instilled into the ear for otorrhoea. Drinking the water which has been used by a cousin to wash his face relieves intestinal colic. Medicine is made from the hairs of the beard of a cousin or from an *mbile* and used for chest trouble.

H. S. STANNUS-WAYAO

PLATE XXII

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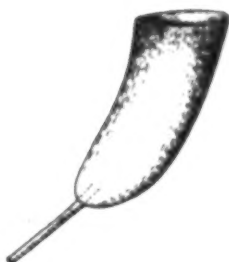
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17

1, CUPPING HORN; 2, SURGICAL KNIFE; 3, SPLINT; 4, EXEMA FUNNEL; 5-11, CHILDREN'S TOYS; 12-17, DRUMS

[End Plate 22]